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**CEPPS/IRI Quarterly Report: January 1 to March 31, 2005
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I. SUMMARY

The Alliance for Reform and Democracy in Asia (ARDA) made significant progress this quarter developing the Singapore-based Secretariat. ARDA's ambitious schedule allowed them to delve into many issues that affect Asia, and specifically, those of concern to Asian democrats. ARDA continues to build relationships with other like-minded institutions throughout the region. By increasing their visibility, ARDA will become more attractive to other potential donors and is moving towards become a long-term sustainable institution.

While working on conferences and workshops, ARDA continued to develop its existing programs and update its website, www.asiademocracy.org, on a daily basis with relevant regional information and ARDA activities. Additionally, ARDA released its previously delayed Malaysian election report, highlighting key issues and findings for the 2004 Malaysian elections. This quarter, the ARDA Steering Committee met for the first time in 2005 and approved the general direction and planned activities for ARDA, concretely paving the way for ARDA to progress. Following the Steering Committee meeting, ARDA leadership developed a list of key programs they hope to integrate into the next grant cycle.

ARDA focused considerable effort this quarter preparing for the World Forum on Democracy in Asia (WFDA). The forum is slated to be held on August 1-3 and will be the culmination of much of ARDA's work up until this point. ARDA expects WFDA to be a groundbreaking forum in which the Asia Democracy Index (ADI), a comprehensive ranking of Asian nations and territories, is made public for the first time. WFDA will also be a unique opportunity for Asian groups to seriously discuss the issues that affect Asia and how regional members are best suited to address such issues. Additionally, ARDA remains prepared to conduct Rapid Response Missions as the need arises and conducted one in Cambodia in response to the removal of political immunity from three Sam Rainsy Party (SRP) MPs.

II. BACKGROUND

In October 2000, a group of Asian democrats from more than 10 countries gathered in Bangkok, Thailand to form the Alliance for Reform and Democracy in Asia (ARDA), a regional advocacy and information-sharing network. The purpose of ARDA is to provide a forum for reformers across Asia to communicate, cooperate, and support the advancement of democracy in the region. One of the founding principles of the Alliance was to challenge the obstacles of “noninterference” and “Asian values” to say that democracy, clean government and human rights must be Asian values.

At the Bangkok meeting, participants approved a Resolution of Formation that established goals for the group and the membership of ARDA’s interim steering committee. Following the October meeting, IRI established an ARDA website, www.asiademocracy.org, giving basic information on the group and posting ARDA’s founding documents and actions. The website has been periodically updated to include new ARDA activities and statements.

ARDA has also conducted three Rapid Response Missions (RRMs). The first took place in June 2001 when a two-member team deployed to Malaysia for the purpose of investigating the circumstances of the detention of “reformasi” activists under Malaysia’s Internal Security Act (ISA). The team consisted of ARDA Vice Chair Dr. S. Oyun and Cambodian Member of Parliament Tioulong Saumura. The mission attracted significant local and international coverage of ARDA’s support for Malaysian democrats.

A second mission took place in October 2001, following the announcement of snap elections in Singapore. Australian elections expert David Muffet traveled to Singapore to conduct an assessment of the Singaporean election system. After meeting with Singaporean politicians, journalists and community activists, Dr. Muffet made recommendations for reforms that level the playing field for opposition parties and give Singaporeans a meaningful choice in electing government officials.

ARDA’s third RRM occurred in August 2004 when an ARDA team traveled to Hanoi, Vietnam to meet with family members of political prisoners and dissidents. ARDA discovered that communication and intimidation ranked as the most serious issues in Vietnam.

In addition to RRM, ARDA has also sponsored election observations in Malaysia in March 2004 and in Hong Kong in September 2004. Prior to the observations, ARDA sent assessment teams to the countries to research the political environment, and to meet with NGOs, election commissioners and the press in order to determine the amount of transparency that existed within each system. After each election observation, ARDA staff produced a report and posted it on the ARDA website.

ARDA has hosted three conferences to provide opportunities for participants from Asian countries to exchange ideas and experiences, as well as focus on issues such as responsive governance, transparency, and accountability. The most recent conference was held in Indonesia in June 2002 and was co-sponsored by the Council of Asian Liberals and Democrats (CALD), IRI, NDI and IFES. The conference brought Indonesian political parties and party activists from

democratic parties around the region together to share their election experiences, and to discuss how to strengthen internal democracy and build grassroots organizations.

In June 2004, ARDA received IRI funding to set-up the ARDA Secretariat in Singapore. The Secretariat was in operation by October 2004, and has worked with IRI staff to formulate a system of administration for program funds and to improve the overall capacity of ARDA. Shortly before the establishing the Secretariat, ARDA held a Steering Committee meeting in Taipei where members discussed hiring Secretariat staff, membership requirements, and prepared the ARDA charter.

IRI is funding an upcoming ARDA book that will compile essays from regional activists on the topic of democracy in Asia. The purpose of the book is to provide the first-person testimony of Asian democrats, spark debate within Asia, and encourage democrats across Asia to push for change. To date, ARDA has chosen writers for the book and is in the process of collecting first drafts of their chapters.

ARDA is also working on its “Adopt-a-Burmese” program. The program is a letter writing campaign on behalf of imprisoned Burmese dissidents. The program hopes to put pressure on the oppressive regime in Burma and encourage dissidents in their struggle, as well as provide more public attention to the problems in Burma. IRI has also contracted with ARDA for four RRM.

III. PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

A. Singapore election observation

ARDA sent a distinguished and experienced election observation (EO) team to Singapore from January 8 to 9 to study the city-state’s election system. The team comprised of Dr. Paul Scott (see below for bios)¹, who led the team, Mr. Martin Lee, Mr. Earl Parreno, Mr. Herman Vermeer and Mr. Michael Mitchell. The team’s schedule was filled with consecutive meetings with Singapore Press Holdings (a government-controlled newspaper publisher that publishes more than a dozen newspapers and over 60 periodicals in Singapore), political parties, NGOs and the public. The two political parties willing to meet with the ARDA team were the National Solidarity Party (NSP) and the Singapore Democratic Party (SDP). ARDA observed distinct differences between the philosophies presented by members of the two parties. The NSP members were hopeful that change to make the elections more free and fair would come from the government, especially considering Singapore’s new Prime Minister Mr. Lee Hsien Loong. The SDP members, on the other hand, felt that change would need to come from the people and that opposition political parties should not be dependent on the goodwill of the government for

¹ **Dr. Paul Scott** is a Professor at Kansai Gaidai University, Osaka, Japan, director of the Sam Rainsy DEED Center, and a frequent participant in EO missions. **Mr. Herman Vermeer** was a European MP from 2001-2004 in the Netherlands. **Mr. Martin Lee** is a leading figure in Hong Kong politics, chairman of the Democratic Party until recently, and is arguably the most popular politician in Hong Kong today. **Mr. Earl Parreno** is a senior journalist in the Philippines and a member of the board of trustees at the Institute of Political and Electoral Reforms. **Mr. Michael Mitchell** is a partner at the DC consulting firm Orion Strategies, and has previously served as special assistant to Sen. Mitch McConnell, and Director of Congressional Relations for the Department of State’s Office of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs.

change to come about. Unfortunately the Elections Department, MediaCorp, and several political parties (including the People's Action Party (PAP), Workers' Party (WP), Singapore People's Party (SPP) and Pertubuhan Kebangsaan Melayu Singapura (PKMS)) all declined invitations for meetings with the ARDA team.

The ARDA EO team first met with three senior journalists from Singapore Press Holdings (SPH). The meeting, which was scheduled for an hour, lasted over two hours. According to Dr. Scott, the discussions went from "sometimes aggressive to sometimes cordial." When Mr. Vermeer asked for a comment on the view that opposition parties are seen as 'weak' between elections, one of the journalists said that they "barely existed." The following day, the ARDA EO team met with various Singapore-based NGOs, including the Think Centre (TC) and the Open Singapore Centre (OSC). The NGOs' representatives briefed the team on the state of civil society in Singapore. According to a TC member, civil society in Singapore is almost non-existent and has been subsumed under the umbrella of civic societies. Issues such as funding limitations, activity regulations and disregarding political feedback units suggestions were raised.

The public forum, which was held the afternoon of January 9, drew an audience of about 50 and was chaired by Mr. JB Jeyaretnam, leader of the Worker's Party in Singapore. Speaking on the panel were Mr. Yap Keng Ho, an internet activist, and Dr. Tan Chong Kee, the founder of the now defunct political chat site called Sintercom. The ARDA team listened to the views of members of the public on the election system in Singapore. Mr. Jeyaretnam began the forum with some thought-provoking remarks. Those who spoke up were generally critical of the system. A few participants spoke of the fear of voting against the ruling party. One person cited the fact the ballot papers were numbered and therefore could be traced back to the voters. Another said that Singaporeans were totally dependent on the government for their survival, which included the homes they lived in, the supply of power and water, transport and even jobs. A complete election report is currently being printed and will be made available to USAID upon its completion and will be submitted along with the next quarterly report.

B. Cambodia Rapid Response Mission

Following the lifting of parliamentary immunity for three Cambodian opposition leaders, ARDA sent a four member Rapid Response Mission to Cambodia. The objectives of the mission were to (1) to seek cooperation from the Cambodian government to respect human rights and democracy in Cambodia, (2) to impress upon the Cambodian government to desist in its persecution of members of the opposition, and (3) to show solidarity with pro-democracy forces and lend support to their efforts to advance democracy in the country.

ARDA's team was comprised of Mr. Ramon C. Casiple, Executive Director, Institute for Political and Electoral Reforms, Dr Xavier Jayakumar, Vice President, National Justice (Keadilan) Party, Dr Hong-zen Wang, Taiwanese Scholar on South-East Asian issues, and Ms Monica Kumar, ARDA Staff Officer. In the course of the two-day mission, the team met with officials and representatives from the Sam Rainsy Party, the Cambodia Office of the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights, Cambodian sectoral organizations, Cambodian civil society organizations, human rights organizations and the Undersecretary of State from the Ministry of Interior. Following the mission, ARDA concluded that the Association of Southeast

Asian Nations (ASEAN), the European Union (EU) and other international bodies must continually urge the Cambodian government to respect human rights, the rule of law, and to uphold a pluralist democracy.

C. North Korean Human Rights Conference

ARDA representatives attended the 6th International Conference on North Korean Human Rights and Refugees, entitled “Shining the Light of Human Rights on North Korea,” which was held in Seoul, South Korea from February 14 to 16. This unique opportunity to connect with NGO leaders from all over the world allowed ARDA to raise its profile and interact with people leading the fight to protect human rights in North Korea. Renowned attendees included the Reverend Benjamin Yoon from North Human Rights, Mr. Sang-Hoon Bang from Chosun Ilbo, Mr. Carl Gershman from the National Endowment for Democracy, Mr. Vaclav Havel, the Former President of the Czech Republic and Mr. Kwan-Yong Park, Former Speaker, National Assembly, South Korea. ARDA observed a large number of international attendees at the conference, both from Asia and around the world. However, ARDA noted a lack of representation from Southeast Asia, which they identified as an issue to address in the future. From the lack of Asian based non-governmental organizations (NGOs) present, ARDA determined that working to coordinate and collaborate with like-minded organizations throughout Asia will result in a stronger Asian presence in future conferences.

D. World Forum on Democracy in Asia Workshop II: “Assisting Transitions to Democracy in Asia”

Democrats from Asia and beyond came together from March 9-10, 2005 for the second World Forum for Democratization in Asia (WFDA) workshop entitled “Assisting Transitions to Democracy in Asia.” Held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, the workshop featured panelists from Cambodia, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Nepal, Pakistan and Singapore who made presentations on civil liberties and the current political situation in their respective countries. Workshop participants, including representatives from over 20 organizations, discussed strategies to best assist the democratization process in each of the panelists’ countries.

At the conclusion of the two full days of the workshop, specific strategies were drafted by the country presenters and participants to promote greater freedoms of expression and association in each of these six states. A common thread which ran through the discussions was the call for free and fair elections and universal suffrage by the country presenters. Participants of the Workshop collectively expressed particular concern over the following urgent situations:

- **Nepal** - the rapid reversal of democracy in Nepal since the beginning of this year.
- **Cambodia** - the lifting of parliamentary immunity from opposition members of parliament on February 3, 2005. This represents a serious threat to the effective functioning of the constitutional opposition in Cambodia.
- **Pakistan** - the actions of the Pakistani government in preventing Senator Sanaullah Baloch from participating in the Workshop. Senator Baloch had been invited to speak on the political situation in Pakistan; however, on 7 March,

without warning, he was not allowed to board his flight to Malaysia, despite the fact that all of his travel documents were in order.

- **Hong Kong** - the resignation of Tung Chee-hwa may result in a weakening by the Beijing government of the provisions in the Basic Law regarding the term of the Chief Executive. This could further reduce the value of the Basic Law as a guarantee of the constitutional rights of the people of Hong Kong.
- **Singapore** - the unabated atmosphere of fear and the stifling of dissent. Notably, the government is continuing its practice of using defamation lawsuits to bankrupt opposition figures in order to bar them from the political arena.

E. Steering Committee Meeting in Kuala Lumpur

ARDA held its bi-annual Steering Committee meeting on March 11, 2005 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia immediately following the World Forum for Democratization in Asia (WFDA) Workshop II. One of the highlights of this second Steering Committee meeting was the appointment of two new Steering Committee members. The two new members are Ms Emily Lau, the first woman to be elected in the Hong Kong LegCo in 1991 and Mr. Wang Dan, a prominent student leader in the 1989 Tian'anmen protests. Observers from Democracy International, IRI, National Endowment for Democracy (NED), National Democratic Institute (NDI), Open Society Institute (OSI) and Taiwan Foundation for Democracy (TFD) were invited to attend the meeting. The Steering Committee members were updated on past and on-going ARDA projects, as well as plans for the future.

F. Asia Democracy Index Implementation

ARDA continues to develop an Asia Democracy Index (ADI) designed to measure democracy in Asia. ARDA has the intention of releasing results from the first ADI at the WFDA in 2005. The ADI will be a yearly survey to measure good governance among Asian governments. The reason ARDA is undertaking this task is to produce the first democracy index for Asians - by Asians. A group of academics and activists from Hong Kong, Japan, Malaysia, Mongolia, Pakistan, Singapore, Taiwan, and the US came together recently to design the survey and formulate the methodology. Dr Paul Scott, a member of ARDA's Steering Committee, was appointed Project Director. He will be assisted by Ms. Salbiah Ahmad, the Project Officer.

Due to shortcomings, existing indices of democratization do not accurately reflect the real political situation in Asian countries. In many instances, the survey findings remain vague and are therefore of limited application to democratization efforts. Some of the problems include:

- Excessive reliance on information provided by governments;
- Failure to incorporate minority and non-mainstream opinions;
- Over-emphasis on "economic freedoms";
- Adoption of a non-prescriptive approach;

As mentioned, apart from evaluating the state of democracy in Asian countries, the ADI will also focus on the problems confronting the development or restoration of democracy in the countries and what measures need to be taken to surmount these obstacles.

The objectives of the ADI are:

- To address and rectify the shortcomings of existing indices;
- To rank and describe Asian governments according to their democratic / authoritarian practices;
- To act as points of reference and advocacy for democracy groups in Asia;
- To prescribe plans of action the countries surveyed can adopt for improvements to be made in their existing democracies or democratization processes.

ARDA will publish an ADI annual report which will include developing a database where the state and progress of democracy within Asian countries are documented. This will be done with the help of country representatives working in cooperation with ARDA. The report will include:

1. A section that will describe events that shaped (negatively and positively) the democratization process of each country.
2. The ranking of the countries and governments. This will be done under six main components:
 - a. Civil Rights
 - b. Elections and Political Processes
 - c. Governance and Corruption
 - d. Media
 - e. Rule of Law
 - f. Participation and Representation

The following countries/territories have been identified for inclusion in the ADI: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Burma, Cambodia, Hong Kong, Indonesia, South Korea, Malaysia, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand, East Timor and Tibet.

IV. RESULTS/ ACCOMPLISHMENTS

1. Increase communication and cooperation among democratic political leaders throughout the region in order to strengthen efforts to bring about democratic reform in Asia.

The WFDA workshop once again provided a venue for Asian leaders and activists to meet from throughout the region, and in this case, present papers and discuss issues relating to democratic transitions. The panelists and participants will use the findings and presentations in order to prepare for the next workshop which will eventually lead to the WFDA, where Asian activists can put forth a solid and well thought out plan of action for increasing democracy in Asia.

The ADI, which ARDA is currently working to assemble, provides an excellent opportunity for Asian democrats to cooperate to produce a document that is both accurate and useful as a tool for promoting democratic reform. Furthermore, ARDA hopes that the ADI will spark debate and discussion on the wide range of political systems found

within Asia and will allow current democratic leaders to have tangible data with which they can compare and contrast their own experiences.

2. Facilitate moral and political support for democratic reform through cooperative efforts of Asian democratic leaders.

The WFDA workshop on “Assisting Transitions to Democracy in Asia” allowed ARDA to bring democrats from all over Asia and the world to collaborate and discuss current and past democratic transitions. By consciously bringing together a group so dedicated to the same cause, ARDA facilitated the exchange of ideas and relationship building that is so critical to democratic movements, especially for nascent groups who do not experience much support within their own country.

The Cambodia Rapid Response Mission, following the Parliament’s lifting of immunity for three opposition MPs, demonstrated to the region ARDA’s commitment to democratic principles. Furthermore, the solidarity in the democracy movement provided the MPs, and other individuals throughout the region who have suffered under similar situations, encouragement and let them know that the rest of Asia, and the world, was watching.

3. Assist ARDA in becoming an autonomous organization capable of securing its own funds and organizing its own activities in support of democratic reform.

ARDA continues to work to solidify its position in the Asia region. The Singapore election observation mission, as well as each event in which ARDA generates press, raise the legitimacy of ARDA and showcase the groundbreaking work that ARDA is doing. ARDA’s focus on Singapore is unusual in that many groups overlook the nation-state due to its economic prosperity.

The Steering Committee meeting held in Kuala Lumpur provided ARDA with an opportunity to continue to institutionalize and refine their internal structures.

ARDA continues to make substantial progress with its institutional development. As part of the development process, ARDA has worked on increasing membership and has also invested time in developing partnerships with other Asia-based organizations with overlapping and similar goals. ARDA’s presence at the North Korea conference again provided an opportunity for ARDA to increase its visibility, both in Asia and throughout the world.

ARDA currently employ an executive director, a program officer and an accountant that manage the administrative and program responsibilities in the office. ARDA sends in its monthly receipts and Quicken reports to IRI accounting and IRI sends wires of money according to the budgets ARDA submits in advance. ARDA maintains open communication with IRI and submits regular information about programmatic activities. IRI plans to send an accountant out to ARDA in the early part of the third quarter 2005 to work with ARDA to identify key areas of focus to prepare for becoming a subgrantee.

V. FUTURE ACTIVITIES

World Forum for Democracy in Asia Biennial Conference

ARDA will continue to work with the Taiwan Foundation for Democracy (TFD) and the Council of Asian Liberals and Democrats (CALD) to plan the workshops leading up to the WFDA. ARDA, TFD and CALD will also plan the WFDA to be held August 1-3, 2005. The World Movement for Democracy had also indicated that it would be interested in being involved in the WFDA.

ARDA Book

IRI had approved funding for the production of an ARDA book. The purpose of this book is to encourage and inspire the democracy movement in Asia. ARDA has lined up the following activists to contribute chapters for the book: Mr. Sam Rainsy (Cambodia), Mr. Martin Lee (Hong Kong), Mr. Tian Chua (Malaysia), and Dr. Soon Juan Chee (Singapore). More contributors may be invited. The book is slated for publication in 2005.

Asia Democracy Index

ARDA plans to develop an index to measure democracy in Asia; results will be released at the WFDA in 2005. The ADI will be a yearly survey to measure good governance among Asian governments. The reason ARDA is undertaking this task is to produce the first democracy index for Asians - by Asians. ARDA staff, academic experts, activists and an IRI representative met in Taipei January 17-21 to develop the methodology and timeline for production of the ADI.

Rapid Response Missions

ARDA is prepared to conduct Rapid Response Missions on short notice in order to address political crises that emerge. The purpose of the Mission is to draw awareness to events throughout Asia that threaten democratic stability and to let governments in Asia know that Asian organizations are watching them.